

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Houston Mesa Grassland Maintenance

Project No. 07-608

Region/GMU: Region VI / Unit 22

HPC: Payson Natural Resources Committee

Project Type: Mechanical Thinning (Agra-axe)

Project Description:

This project is a landscape grassland restoration that involves Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), Tonto National Forest (TNF) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), A total of 3300 Acres of juniper/pinon will be removed from historical grassland, to enhance the existing grasslands. While reducing the fire danger to local communities. This project is planned in four steps: the first step involves cutting 1200 acres of juniper/pinon by agar-ax on Houston Mesa. The next three steps will cut 700acres in each step. Houston Mesa is located in unit 22 approximately 2 mile north of Payson Arizona, and receives approximately 24 inches of precipitation a year.

Wildlife Species to Benefit: Elk ,Mule Deer

Possible Funding Partners:

Implementation Schedule:

Beginning: June 1, 2009

Completed: May 31, 2014

PROJECT FUNDING

SBG Funds Requested: \$ 34,500

NEPA Compliance: Yes

Cost Share Funds: \$ 133,625

Total Project Costs: \$ 168.125

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant: Henry Apfel

Telephone: (928) 476-2264

Address:

Arizona Game and Fish Dept.

7200 E. University

Mesa, AZ 85207

AGFD Contact and Phone No.

(If applicant is not AGFD personnel)

Coordinated with: USFS, Tonto National Forest, Payson Ranger District

NRCS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ray Tanner (Rancher)

Applicant's signature:

Date:

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATIONS TO:

Mark Zornes, Game Branch

2221 W. Greenway Rd

WAS PROJECT PRESENTED TO LOCAL HPC: YES

HAS PROJECT BEEN SUBMITTED IN PREVIOUS YEARS: NO

NEED STATEMENT/PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

Juniper/pinion pine encroachment into historic grassland is a major problem in Central Arizona. Encroachment has reduced the productivity of grasslands, thus forage for livestock and wildlife and increased the fire danger to local communities. Remnant grasslands habitat will be enhanced and the danger from wild fires will be reduced by removing invading trees along the perimeter of the existing meadows and historic meadows on approximately 5 sections. This project is part of an overall landscape restoration that is designed to restore the diminishing grassland, while assisting the Tonto National Forest to reduce fire danger. All NEPA has been completed on this proposal. This enhancement will provide additional forage and habitat for elk, mule deer and livestock.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The primary objective of this project is to reestablish grassland habitat and improve forage through the use of an axe to remove junipers/ pinion. Grassland enhancement will occur through the removal of junipers/pinion and subsequent burning to expand the grassland/woodland edge effect. This project will dovetail nicely into the Wild lands Urban Interface project of the USFS to reduce fire danger.

Removal of juniper/pinion on a total of 3300 acres over 4 years will enhance grassland habitat for elk, mule deer and livestock.

The project is a goal of Region VI and the district habitat plan, the Wildlife Management Program Strategic Plan and the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy 2005-2015.

PROJECT STRATEGIES:

Archeological clearance on 600 acres will be completed by the USFS in the spring of 2008 first, and then use an axe to remove junipers/pinion on approximately 1200 acres of historic grassland. The project will consist of 4 stages, with 1200 acre being cut the first year, and 700 acre to be cut in the preceding years until all 3300 acres are cut. The project area may be subject to a prescribed broadcast burn 3 to 5 years after tree thinning for fuel reduction or to eliminate juniper regrowth.

LAND OWNERSHIP AT PROJECT SITE (Please state specifically if PRIVATE PROPERTY and provide landowner's name):

The land is managed by the United States Forest Service, Tonto National Forest, and Payson Ranger District.

IF PRIVATE PROPERTY, IS THERE A STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE DEPARTMENT? No

PROJECT LOCATION:

The project is located approximately two miles north of Payson Arizona in Game Management Unit 22 (102N, R10E, S22,S15,S14,S13,S18, S17, S8). See attached map.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

Houston Mesa Grassland Maintenance Habitat Enhancement

BUDGET ANALYSIS

COOPERATOR AND PROJECT COMONENT	COST- SHARE DOLLARS AVAILABLE	SBG FUNDS REQUESTED
Arizona Game and Fish Department (SBG Funds) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund of the on-the-ground cost associated with operation of the agra-axe. Calculated as 178 acres @ \$110/acre. Archaeological clearance on 600 acre. 		\$19,500 \$15,000
Arizona Game and Fish Department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide in-kind labor to write proposal, coordinate project, complete report, etc. Calculated as five days @ \$125/day. Big Game Stewardship Fund. Operation of agar-ax, Calculated as 135 Acre @ \$110/acre 	\$625 \$15,000	
USDA – Tonto National Forest, Payson Ranger District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide administrative support including labor/funding to produce NEPA, border flagging. Archaeological clearance on 600 acres. 	\$ 5,500 \$15,000	
NRCS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund of on-the-ground cost Associated with the operation of the agar-ax. Calculated as 432 Acers @ \$110/acre. 	\$47,500	
State Dept of Aquaculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund of on-the ground cost Associated with the operation of the agar-ax. Calculated as 	\$50,000	

455 Acre@ \$110/ acre.		
Totals:	\$ 133,625	\$34,500

Total Project Cost: \$ 168,125
Ratio Of Cost-Share Dollars: SBG Funds = 3.9-1

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

The plant community in the area is primarily grassland and pinon/juniper woodland at an average elevation of 5200 feet above sea level. The area is flat ,with light sloping. Species include various high desert grasses, alligator juniper, pinon pine, and oak brush. The diversity of plant species would increase after treatment with more grasses, shrubs, and forbs, which produce an abundance of forage for elk, livestock and deer. (photos)

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

Arizona Game and Fish Department – Special Big Game Funds

- Provide the funding for agra-axe contracted operation to cut 178 acres at an estimated \$110/acre.
- Provide in-kind contributions in the form of labor for contract administration, project origination, and project coordination.
- Provide the funding for archeological clearance on 600 acres.
- Big Game Stewardship funding for agar-ax contracted operation to cut 135 acres at an estimated \$110/acre.

U.S. Forest Service, Tonto National Forest, Payson Ranger District

- Provide administrative support in the form of necessary NEPA and archaeological clearances on 600 acres.
- Provide letter of approval for implementation of project (Decision Memo by June 2007, USFS).
- Provide on-the-ground boundary marking.

National Resources Conservation Service

- Provide the funding for agar-ax contracted operation to cut 432 acres at an estimated \$110/acre.

Arizona Livestock and Crop Conservation Grant

- .Provide the funding for agar-ax contracted operation to cut 455 acres at an estimated \$110/acre.

Agra-axe Contractor

- Provide agra-axe and operator through project completion.
- Ray Tanner (Rancher)

Payson Natural Resources Committee

- Review project.

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

The project proponent will ensure project completion with coordination between Arizona Game and Fish Department , Payson Ranger District and NRCS which is currently monitoring the area .

This area would be surveyed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department and will be monitored for wildlife use.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

Project maintenance and monitoring will be completed by the Tonto National Forest.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

The project proponent is responsible for completing the project completion report.

WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (see attached worksheet):

TREE SHEARING (AGRA-AXE, PUSH) PROJECTS (see attached worksheet):

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
TREE SHEARING WORKSHEET**

PROJECT NAME: Deadman Mesa Grassland Maintenance

- 1) What is the estimated acreage of the project?
1200
- 2) How are the trees to be cleared? (agra axe, chain saw, push):
Agra-axe
- 3) What is the estimated number of trees per acre?
50-70, sites vary from a 100 to 20.
- 4) Describe trees to be cleared (species, estimated diameter, single stem, multi-stem):
Alligator juniper, <12 inches dbh, multi-stem, pinion <12 inches

dbh, single stem.

- 5) Describe terrain (slope, soil type, rocks, etc.)
Flat or gentle slope with a few rocks although there are areas with more rocks.

- 6) Please list any special land management status for the project site (i.e. Wilderness, National Park, National Monument, etc). If private land, list landowner.
N/A

- 7) Please provide the following information about access to the proposed site:

Type of access (mark one): ☒ 2x4 vehicles ☐ 4x4 only ☐ foot only**

**If foot access only: Distance in miles: Approx. hiking time:

Does access to this site require crossing private or tribal lands? ☐ YES
☒ NO

Is the site relatively accessible for tree shearing equipment? ☒ YES
☐ NO

Please describe any restrictions to public access:
N/A